

Message from the Secretary

I am pleased to share with you the President's 2003 budget for the United States Department of Transportation. The proposed budget reflects the Administration's commitment to providing the American people with a transportation system that is safe, efficient, and secure. The \$59.3 billion proposed by the President will enable the Department to continue its important work with our partners in State and local governments and the business community to ensure that the public continues to enjoy the transportation service that meets its needs.



The tragic events of September 11th have left all Americans with a renewed sense of appreciation and awareness of the systems that support our way of life. As we look forward to 2003, we must continue our ongoing goal to improve the safety of transportation for our citizens. By encouraging improvements in engineering, and the use of new and emerging technologies, and through public awareness and educational campaigns, the Department of Transportation will continue to press for safety improvements in all areas of transportation.

At the same time, we are compelled to consider in a new way, the importance of securing our national assets from those who wish to do harm through acts of violence. This is why the work of the new Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is so important to all of us. Its mission is prevention. Working closely with the other operating administrations, TSA is charged with identifying and implementing changes in processes, systems, and behavior that will keep our transportation system secure. For 2003, President Bush is proposing \$4.8 billion in funding to support the first full year of operations for TSA. In my view, this level of funding is crucial to ensure that the TSA can meet the many challenges that lie ahead as it works to accomplish its mission. I am confident that with the support of the Congress we will be successful.

Although funding for TSA represents a new element in the Department's budget, President Bush has also continued his commitment to the ongoing missions of the Department. The \$59.3 billion request represents an overall increase of \$4.7 billion or 8 percent when adjusted for the reduction in highway funding required by law due to the drop in highway tax receipts. In 2000, 2001, and 2002, our Nation has been reaping the benefits of record-level funding for surface transportation as authorized in the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century. The guaranteed funding level, tied to Highway Trust Fund receipts, has been providing the States with much needed resources to support the Nation's highway infrastructure as the Congress intended. However, for 2003, declining fuel tax revenues and other Highway Trust Fund receipts will, for the first time, trigger a downward adjustment in highway program levels.

For the Coast Guard, the 2003 request represents the largest increase in the service's history. These funds will assist the Coast Guard in securing our homeland and providing safety to American citizens.

As we move forward through the annual budget and planning process, I look forward to working with the Congress, my colleagues in the Administration, and the American people to ensure that our transportation systems continue to be second to none.

Norman Y. Mineta
Secretary